

E Z R A .

INTRODUCTION.

THOUGH the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah were undoubtedly regarded as one Book in two parts, both by the Jewish Church and by the early Christian Fathers, yet the judgment of modern criticism, that they were originally two distinct works, seems to be, on the whole, deserving of acceptance.

The object of the writer of Ezra is to give an account of the return from the Captivity, and of the subsequent fortunes of the Palestinian Jews until the eighth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, B.C. 457. The matters to which he directs attention are three only:—(1) The number, family, and (to some extent) the names of those who returned from Babylonia with Ezra and with Zerubbabel (ii., viii. 1–20); (2) The rebuilding of the Temple and the circumstances connected therewith (i., iii. – vii.); and (3) The misconduct of the returned Jews in respect of mixed marriages, and the steps taken by Ezra in consequence (ix., x.).

The Book of Ezra is made up of two completely distinct sections. (a) In i. – vi., the writer treats of the return from the Captivity and of the events following (B.C. 538–516), or a period of twenty-three years. It belongs to the time when Zerubbabel was governor of Judæa, Jeshua High-Priest, and Zechariah and Haggai Prophets. (b) vii. – end. This relates the commission given to Ezra by

Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his reign (B.C. 458), the journey of Ezra to Jerusalem, and his proceedings there (April, B.C. 458–April, B.C. 457). There is thus a gap of fifty-seven years between the first section of the Book and the second; from which it appears that the writer of the second portion cannot well have been a witness of the events recorded in the first.

Jewish tradition ascribes the authorship of the whole Book to Ezra. Modern critics generally admit that Ezra was the original and sole author of the entire second section (vii. – x.), but consider him the compiler of the first (i. – vi.) from state documents, national records, and lists. It is probable that the Book of Ezra was composed soon after the arrangements with respect to the mixed marriages had been completed; *i.e.* in B.C. 457 or 456.

In character the Book of Ezra is historical, and like Chronicles, it lays great stress on the externals of religion; it gives special prominence to the Levites, and exhibits a genealogical bias; it lays down very distinctly the general principle of a special Providence (viii. 22); and it applies this principle to particular points of the history not unfrequently.

In style Ezra more resembles Daniel than any other Book of Scripture, always excepting Chronicles. This may be accounted for

by these two writers being both Babylonian Jews. The work contains also a considerable number of proper names and words which are either known or suspected to be Persian,¹ and altogether, the language is such as might have been looked for under the circumstances of the time, when the contact into which the Jews had been brought with the Babylonians and the Persians had naturally introduced among

them a good many foreign words and modes of speech.

The text of Ezra is not in a good condition. The general bearing of the narrative is, however, untouched by slight blemishes which affect chiefly such minute points as the names and numbers of those who returned from the Captivity, the weight and number of the sacrificial vessels, and the like.

¹ The following are the proper names, certainly Persian, which occur in Ezra: Cyrus, Darius, Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes, Mithredath (Mithridates), Persia, and Achmetha (Ecbatana). To these may be added, as probably Persian, Rehum, Shimshai, Tatnai, Shetharboznai, and Tabeel. Persian words, not belonging to the class of proper names, which may be recognized in Ezra are the following: *ganza* or *gaza*, "treasury" (v. 17,

vi. 1, vii. 20); *ganabara* or *gazabara*, "treasurer" (i. 8); *kshatrapā*, "satrap" (viii. 36); *angara*, "a letter" (iv. 8); *nipishā*, the same (iv. 7); *patigama*, "an edict" (iv. 17); *apatama* (?), "at last" (iv. 13); *tarsata*, name of an office, literally, "the feared" (ii. 63); *usfrana*, "speedily, diligently, abundantly" (v. 8, vi. 8; &c.); and *darkon*, or perhaps *darkmon*, a gold coin, a "daric" (viii 27).

THE BOOK OF E Z R A .

CHAP. 1. NOW in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD ^aby the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, ^bthat he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, ¶ Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (^che is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. ¶ Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. ¶ Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand

^a 2 Chr. 36.
22, 23.
Jer. 25. 12.
& 29. 10.
^b ch. 5. 13, 14.

^c Isai. 44. 28.
& 45. 1, 13.

^d Dan. 6. 26.

^e Phil. 2. 13.

^f ch. 5. 14.
& 6. 5.
^g 2 Kin. 24.
13.
2 Chr. 36. 7.

^h See ch. 5.
14.

¹ Heb. *caused a voice to pass.*

² Heb. *lift him up.*

³ That is, *helped them.*

I. 1. By the first year of Cyrus is to be understood the first year of his sovereignty over the Jews, or B.C. 538.

2. *The LORD God of heaven.* Or, "Jehovah, the God of Heaven." In the original Persian, the document probably ran—"Ormazd, the God of Heaven." The Hebrew transcript took "Jehovah" as the equivalent of "Ormazd." The Persian notion of a single Supreme Being—Ahura-Mazda, "the much-knowing, or much-bestowing Spirit"—did, in fact, approach nearly to the Jewish conception of Jehovah.

hath given me all the kingdoms &c. There is a similar formula at the commencement of the great majority of Persian inscriptions.

he hath charged me to build him an house. It is a reasonable conjecture that, on the capture of Babylon, Cyrus was brought into contact with Daniel, who drew his attention to the prophecy of Isaiah (xliv. 28); and that Cyrus accepted this prophecy as a "charge" to rebuild the Temple.

4. *let the men of his place help him* i.e.

"Let the heathen population help him" (see v. 6).

the freewill offering. Probably that made by Cyrus himself (vv. 7-11).

5. Only a portion of the Israelites took advantage of the permission of Cyrus. Many remained in Babylon, since they were disinclined to relinquish their property. They who returned were persons whom God had especially stirred up to make sacrifices for His glory.

7. *the house of his gods.* Rather, "of his god" (Dan. i. 2), i.e. Merodach, "his lord" (see 2 Chr. xxxvi. 7 note).

8. *Mithredath.* Or, "Mithridates." The occurrence of this name, which means "given by Mithra," or "dedicated to Mithra," is an indication that the Sun-worship of the Persians was at least as old as the time of Cyrus.

Sheshbazzar. i.e. Zerubbabel. On his royal descent, see 1 Chr. iii. 19 note.

9. *chargers.* The word in the original thus translated occurs only in this passage. Its meaning is doubtful. Some derive it

10 chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other
 11 vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

^c Neh. 7. 6, &c.

^b 2 Kin. 24. 14, 15, 16. & 25. 11. 2 Chr. 36. 20.

^c See Neh. 7. 10.

^d Neh. 7. 11.

CHAP. 2. NOW ^athese are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, ²Seraiah, ³Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, ⁴Mizpar, Bigvai, ⁵Rehum, Baanah. ¶ The number of the men of the people of Israel: the children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five. The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. The children of Zaccai, 10 seven hundred and threescore. The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred 12 twenty and two. The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. 15, 16 The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. The 17 children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. The children 18 of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. The children of 19 Jorah, an hundred and twelve. The children of Hashum, two 20 hundred twenty and three. The children of Gibbar, ninety and 21 five. The children of Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty and 22, 23 three. The men of Netophah, fifty and six. The men of 24 Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. The children of 25 Azmaveth, forty and two. The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three. 26 The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. 27, 28 The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two. The 29 men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. The

¹ Heb. the transportation.

² Or, Azariah, Neh. 7. 7.

³ Or, Reaniah.

⁴ Or, Mizpareth.

⁵ Or, Nehun.

⁶ Or, Binnui, Neh. 7. 15.

⁷ Or, Hariyah, Neh. 7. 24.

⁸ Or, Gibeon, Neh. 7. 25.

⁹ Or, Beth-azmaveth, Neh. 7. 28.

from a Heb. root, "to hollow out," and translate "cup" or "vessel."

[*Knives*] This is another doubtful word, only used here. The etymology points to some employment of basket-work.

11. The sum of the numbers as they stand in the present Hebrew text is 2499, instead of 5400. In the Apocryphal book of Esdras the sum given is 5469, and with this sum the items in that place exactly agree (1 Esd. ii. 13, 14). Most commentators propose to correct Ezra by the passage of Esdras; but the items of Esdras are improbable. Probably the sum total in the present passage has suffered corruption.

II. 1. the province] Judæa was no longer a kingdom, but a mere "province" of

Persia. "The children of the province" are the Israelites who returned to Palestine, as distinct from those who remained in Babylonia and Persia.

[*every one unto his city*] That is, to the city whereto his forefathers had belonged. Of course, in the few cases where this was not known (vv. 59-62), the plan could not be carried out.

Two other copies of the list following have come down to us, one in Neh. vii. 7-69, the other in 1 Esd. v. 8-43. All seem to have been taken from the same original document, and to have suffered more or less from corruption. Where two out of the three agree, the reading should prevail over that of the third.

30 children of Nebo, fifty and two. The children of Magbish, an
 31 hundred fifty and six. The children of the other ^eElam, a thou-
 32 sand two hundred fifty and four. The children of Harim, three
 33 hundred and twenty. The children of Lod, ¹Hadid, and Ono,
 34 seven hundred twenty and five. The children of Jericho, three
 35 hundred forty and five. The children of Senaah, three thousand
 36 and six hundred and thirty. ¶ The priests: the children of
 37 Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and
 38 three. The children of ²Immer, a thousand fifty and two.
 39 The children of ³Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and
 40 seven. The children of ⁴Harim, a thousand and seventeen.
 41 ¶ The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the
 42 children of ⁵Hodaviah, seventy and four. The singers: the
 43 children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight. The children
 44 of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater,
 45 the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of
 46 Hatita, the children of Shobai, *in* all an hundred thirty and
 47 nine. ¶ ⁶The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of
 48 Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, the children of Keros, the
 49 children of ⁷Siha, the children of Padon, the children of Leba-
 50 nah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, the chil-
 51 dren of Hagab, the children of ⁸Shalmai, the children of Hanan,
 52 the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of
 53 Reiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the
 54 children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Paseah,
 55 the children of Besai, the children of Asnah, the children of
 56 Mehunim, the children of ⁹Nephusim, the children of Bakkuk,
 57 the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, the children
 58 of ¹⁰Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, the
 59 children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Tha-
 60 mah, the children of Nezhiah, the children of Hatipha. ¶ The
 61 children of ¹¹Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the
 62 children of Sophereth, the children of ¹²Peruda, the children
 63 of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, the
 64 children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of
 65 Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of ¹³Ami. All the ¹⁴Nethi-
 66 nims, and the children of ¹⁵Solomon's servants, *were* three hun-
 67 dred ninety and two. ¶ And these *were* they which went up from
 68 Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, ¹⁶Addan, and Immer: but they
 69 could not shew their father's house, and their ¹⁷seed, whether
 70 they *were* of Israel: the children of Delaiah, the children of
 71 Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two.
 72 And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah,
 73 the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of
 74 the daughters of ¹⁸Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their
 75 name: these sought their register *among* those that were reckoned

^e See ver. 7.

¹ 1 Chr. 24.7.

² 1 Chr. 24.14.

³ 1 Chr. 9.12.

⁴ 1 Chr. 24.8.

⁵ 1 Chr. 9.2.

⁶ 1 Kin. 9.21.

⁷ Josh. 9.21,

27.

⁸ 1 Chr. 9.2.

⁹ 1 Kin. 9.21.

¹⁰ 2 Sam. 17.

27.

¹ Or, *Harid*, as it is in some copies.

² Or, *Judeh*, ch. 3. 9. called also *Hodeeah*, Neh. 7. 43.

³ Or, *Sia*.

⁴ Or, *Shalmi*.

⁵ Or, *Nephtesim*.

⁶ Or, *Bazlith*, Neh. 7. 54.

⁷ Or, *Perida*, Neh. 7. 57.

⁸ Or, *Amon*, Neh. 7. 54.

⁹ Or, *Addon*, Neh. 7. 61.

¹⁰ Or, *pedigree*.

43. *The Nethinims*] The *hieroduli* or sacred slaves, "given" to the Levites to assist them in their work (see 1 Chr. ix. 2 note).

59. Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, were probably cities, or villages,

of Babylonia, at which the Jews here spoken of had been settled. The first and third have been reasonably identified with the Thelmé and Chiripha of Ptolemy. Of the rest nothing is known at present.

- by genealogy, but they were not found: ²therefore ¹were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. And the ²Tirshatha said unto them, that they ²should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with ²Urim and with Thummim.
- ⁶⁴ ¶ ¹The whole congregation together *was* forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, beside their servants and their maids, of whom *there were* seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and *there were* among them two hundred singing men and singing women. Their horses *were* seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five; their camels, four hundred thirty and five; *their* asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty. ¶ ¹And *some* of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which *is* at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place: they gave after their ability unto the ⁴treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests' garments. ¶ ²So the priests, and the Levites, and *some* of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.
- CHAP. 3.** AND when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel *were* in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up ³Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and ⁴Zerubbabel the son of ⁵Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as *it is* ⁶written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear *was* upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, *even* ⁶burnt offerings morning and evening.

¹ Matt. 1. 12.
² Luke 3. 27,
 called
Salathiel.

³ Deut. 12. 5.

⁴ Num. 23. 3,
 4.

¹ Heb. *they were polluted from the priesthood.*

² Or, *governor*: See Neh. 8. 9.
³ Or, *Joshua*, Hag. 1. 1. & 2. 2.
 Zech. 3. 1.

⁴ Called *Zorobabel*, Matt. 1. 12. Luke 3. 27.

63. the *Tirshatha*] i.e. Zerubbabel. See margin. The word is probably old Persian, though it does not occur in the cuneiform inscriptions. Some derive it from a root "to fear." See Introduction. p. 570 n. 1.

a priest with *Urim* and with *Thummim*] See Ex. xxviii. 30 note. According to the Rabbinical writers, the second Temple permanently lacked this glory of the first. Zerubbabel, it would seem by the present passage (cp. Neh. vii. 65), expected that the loss would be only temporary.

64. The sum total is given without any variation by Ezra, by Nehemiah (marg. ref.), and by Esdras (1 Esd. v. 41), who adds, that in this reckoning only those of twelve years of age and upward were counted.

It is curious that the total 42,360, is so greatly in excess of the items. Ezra's items make the number 29,818; Nehemiah's 31,089, Esdras, 33,950. Probably the original document was in places illegible, and the writers were forced to make omissions.

69. The numbers here and in Nehemiah (marg. ref.) vary.

70. all Israel] That Israelites of the ten tribes returned to Palestine with Zerubbabel is apparent, (1) from 1 Chr. ix. 3; (2) from the enumeration of twelve chiefs (Neh. vii. 7; 1 Esd. v. 8); and (3) from various expressions in Ezra (ii. 2, 59, iii. 1).

III. 1. the seventh month] i.e. the month Tisri (nearly our September), the most sacred month in the Jewish year (Ex. xxiii. 16; Lev. xxiii. 24-41).

2. Jeshua, the High-Priest, was the son of Jozadak, who was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar (1 Chr. vi. 15).

Zerubbabel was really the son of Pedaiab, Shealtiel's (or Salathiel's) younger brother. But Shealtiel having no sons, and the royal line being continued in the person of his nephew, Zerubbabel, the latter was accounted Shealtiel's son.

3. upon his bases] They restored the old Altar of Burnt-offerings, which stood directly in front of the Temple-porch, upon the old foundation. This became apparent on the clearing away of the ruins, and on a careful examination of the site.

- 4 ^dThey kept also the feast of tabernacles, ^eas it is written, and ^foffered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the ^gcustom, ^has the duty of every day required; and afterward ⁱoffered the ^jcontinual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the ^kLORD. From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But ^lthe foundation of ^mthe temple of the LORD was not yet laid. They gave money also unto the masons, and to the ⁿcarpenters; and ^omeat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of ^pJoppa, ^qaccording to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia. ¶ Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; ^rand appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the ^swork of the house of the LORD. Then stood ^tJeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of ^uJudah, ^vtogether, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites.
- 10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, ^wthey set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, ^xafter the ordinance of David king of Israel. ^yAnd they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; ^zbecause ^{aa}he is good, ^{ab}for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of ^{ac}the LORD was laid. ^{ad}But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, ^{ae}who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for ^{af}joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

¹ Heb. *the matter of the day in his day.*

² Heb. *the temple of the LORD was not yet founded.*
³ Or, *workmen.*

⁴ Or, *Hodaviah*, ch. 2. 40.

⁵ Heb. *as one.*

^d Neh. 8. 14, 17.
^e Zech. 14. 16, 17.

^f Ex. 23. 16.
^g Num. 20. 12, &c.
^h Ex. 29. 38.
ⁱ Num. 28. 3, 11, 19, 26.
^j & 29. 2, 8, 13.

^k 1 Kin. 5. 6, 9.
^l 2 Chr. 2. 10.
^m Acts 12. 20.
ⁿ 2 Chr. 2. 16.
^o Acts 9. 36.
^p ch. 6. 3.

^r 1 Chr. 23. 24, 27.

^s ch. 2. 40.

^t 1 Chr. 16. 5, 6, 42.

^u 1 Chr. 6. 31, & 16. 4.
^v & 25. 1.

^w Ex. 15. 21.
^x 2 Chr. 7. 3.
^y Neh. 12. 24.
^z 1 Chr. 16. 34.
^{aa} Ps. 136. 1.
^{ab} 1 Chr. 16. 41.
^{ac} Jer. 33. 11.
^{ad} See Hag. 2. 3.

7. according to the grant] i.e. in accordance with the permission granted them by Cyrus to rebuild their Temple (i. 1-4).

8. unto the house of God] i.e. to the place where the house of God had been, and where God was believed still to have His special dwelling.

and appointed the Levites] This is the emphatic clause of the present verse. Though so small a number of Levites had returned from Babylon (ii. 40), yet they were especially singled out to be entrusted with the task of superintending and advancing the building of the Temple.

9. Jeshua] See marg. ref. Not the High-Priest, but the head of one of the two Levitical houses which had returned.

together] The Hebrew phrase is very emphatic—"they stood up as one man."

10. they set the priests] Or, according to another reading, "The priests stood."

the Levites the sons of Asaph] i.e. "such of the Levites as were descendants of Asaph." It would seem as if no descendants of Heman or Jeduthun had returned.

12. wept...shouted...for joy] Cp. marg. ref. and Zech. iv. 10. It is implied that the dimensions of the second Temple were smaller than those of the first. Hence the feeling of sorrow which came upon some. They, however, who had not seen the former Temple, and so could not contrast the two, naturally rejoiced to see the Sanctuary of their religion begin to rise from its ruins.

- ^a See ver. 7, 8, 9. **CHAP. 4.** NOW when ^athe adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that ¹the children of the captivity buildeth the temple ²unto the LORD God of Israel; then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him ^bsince the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which ³brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, 'Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, ⁴as ^dking Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. Then ^ethe people of the land weakened the hands of the people of ⁵Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. ⁶And in the reign of ²Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of ⁷Judah and Jerusalem. ¶ And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote ³Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their ⁴companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian ⁸tongue. Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the ⁶scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: ⁹Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their ⁶companions; ⁷the Dinaites, the Apharsath-
- ^b 2 Kin. 17. 24, 32, 33.
^c 10. 37.
 ver. 10.
^d Neh. 2. 20.
^e ch. 1. 1, 2, 3.
^f ch. 3. 3.
^g 2 Kin. 17. 30, 31.

¹ Heb. *the sons of the transportation*.
² Heb. *Ahasueros*.

³ Or, *in peace*.
⁴ Heb. *societies*.

⁵ Or, *secretary*.
⁶ Chald. *societies*.

IV. 1. *adversaries*] i.e. the Samaritans, a mixed race, partly Israelite but chiefly foreign, which had replaced to some extent the ancient inhabitants after they were carried into Captivity by Sargon (see 2 K. xvii. 6 note).

2. Cp. 2 K. xvii. 24-28 notes. *since the days*] Esar-haddon reigned from B.C. 681-668. Thus the Samaritans speak of what had taken place at least 130 years previously. There appear to have been at least three colonisations of Samaria by the Assyrian kings. The first is mentioned in 2 K. xvii. 24. Later in his reign Sargon added to these first settlers an Arabian element. Some thirty or forty years afterwards, Esarhaddon, his grandson, largely augmented the population by colonists drawn especially from the south-east parts of the Empire (v. 10). Thus the later Samaritans were an exceedingly mixed race.

3. *Ye have nothing to do with us*] Because the Samaritans had united idolatrous rites with the worship of Jehovah (2 K. xvii. 29-41). To have allowed them a share in restoring the Temple would have been destructive of all purity of religion.

as king Cyrus...commanded us] The exact words of the edict gave the right of building exclusively to those who should "go up" from Babylonia to Judea (i. 3).

5. *hired counsellors*] Rather, "bribed" officials at the Persian court to interpose

delays and create difficulties, in order to hinder the work.

Darius] i.e. Darius the son of Hystaspes. 6. *Ahasuerus*] Or, Cambyses, the son and successor of Cyrus. Persian kings had often two names.

7. *Artaxerxes*] Gomates, the Pseudo-Smerdis. He succeeded Cambyses (B.C. 521), and reigned seven months, when he was deposed and executed by Darius Hystaspis.

written in the Syrian tongue, &c.] Or, "written in Syriac characters and translated into Syriac." On the use of this tongue as a medium of communication between the Jews and their Eastern neighbours, see 2 K. xviii. 26 note.

8. *the chancellor*] Lit. "lord of judgment;" the title, apparently, of the Persian governor of the Samaritan province. Every Persian governor was accompanied by his province by a "royal scribe" or "secretary," who had a separate and independent authority.

9, 10. These verses form the superscription or address of the letter (v. 11, &c.) sent to Artaxerxes.

The Dinaites were probably colonists from *Dayan*, a country often mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions as bordering on Cilicia and Cappadocia. No satisfactory explanation can be given of the name Apharsathchites (see v. 6 note). The Tarpeletes were colonists from the nation which

- chites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Baby-
 10 lonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, *and* the Elamites, ^σand ^σver. 1.
 the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper
 brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest *that*
 11 *are* on this side the river, ^hand ¹at such a time. ¶ This *is* the ^hSo ver. 11.
 copy of the letter that they sent unto him, *even* unto Artaxerxes ^{17.}
 the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at ^{& ch. 7. 12.}
 12 such a time. Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which
 came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the
 rebellious and the bad city, and have ²set up the walls *thereof*,
 13 and ³joined the foundations. Be it known now unto the king,
 that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up *again*, *then*
 will they not ⁴pay ¹toll, tribute, and custom, and *so* thou shalt ⁴ch. 7. 21
 14 endamage the ⁵revenue of the kings. Now because ⁶we have
 maintenance from *the king's* palace, and it was not meet for us
 to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified
 15 the king; that search may be made in the book of the records
 of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records,
 and know that this city *is* a rebellious city, and hurtful unto
 kings and provinces, and that they have ⁷moved sedition ⁸within
 the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed.
 16 We certify the king that, if this city be builded *again*, and the
 walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion
 17 on this side the river. ¶ *Then* sent the king an answer unto
 Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the
 rest of their ⁹companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the

¹ Chald. *Cheenchth.*⁴ Chald. *give.*⁷ Chald. *made.*² Or, *finished.*⁵ Or, *strength.*⁸ Chald. *in the midst thereof.*³ Chald. *sewed together.*⁶ Chald. *we are salted with
the salt of the palace.*⁹ Chald. *societies.*

the Assyrians called *Tuplai*, the Greeks "Tibareni," and the Hebrews generally "Tubal." (It is characteristic of the later Hebrew language to insert the letter *r* before labials. Cp. *Darmesek* for *Dammesek*, 2 Chr. xxviii. 23 marg.). The Apharsites were probably "the Persians;" the Archevites, natives of Erech [Warka] (Gen. x. 10); the Susanchites, colonists from Shushan or Susa; the Dehavites, colonists from the Persian tribe of the Dai; and the Elamites, colonists from Elam or Elymais, the country of which Susa was the capital.

10. Asnapper was perhaps the official employed by Esar-haddon (r. 2) to settle the colonists in their new country.

on this side the river] Lit. "beyond the river," a phrase used of Palestine by Ezra, Nehemiah, and in the Book of Kings, as designating the region *west* of the Euphrates.

and at such a time] Rather, "and so forth." The phrase is vague, nearly equivalent to the modern use of *et cetera*. It recurs in marg. ref.

13. *toll, tribute, and custom*] Rather, "tribute, provision, and toll" (so v. 20). The "tribute" is the money-tax imposed on each province, and apportioned to the inhabitants by the local authorities; the "provision" is the payment in kind,

which was an integral part of the Persian system; the "toll" is probably a payment required from those who used the Persian highways.

the revenue] The word thus translated is not found elsewhere, and can only be conjecturally interpreted. Modern commentators regard it as an adverb, meaning "at last," or "in the end," and translate, "And so at last shall damage be done to the kings."

14. *we have maintenance*] See marg. The phrase "to eat a man's salt" is common in the East to this day; and is applied not only to those who receive salaries, but to all who obtain their subsistence by means of another. The Persian satraps had no salaries, but taxed their provinces for the support of themselves and their courts.

15. *the book of the records*] Cp. Esth. ii. 23, vi. 1, x. 2. The existence of such a "book" at the Persian court is attested also by Ctesias.

of thy fathers] i.e. thy predecessors upon the throne, Cambyzes, Cyrus, &c. If Artaxerxes was the Pseudo-Smerdis (r. 7 note), these persons were not really his "fathers" or ancestors; but the writers of the letter could not venture to call the king an impostor.

- 18 rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time. The letter
 19 which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me. And
¹I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that
 this city of old time hath ²made insurrection against kings, and
 20 that rebellion and sedition have been made therein. There have
^a 1 Kin. 4. 21. been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ⁴ruled over
^b Ps. 72. 8. all countries ¹beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was
^c Gen. 15. 18. 21 paid unto them. ³Give ye now commandment to cause these
^d Josh. 1. 4. men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another
 22 commandment shall be given from me. Take heed now that ye
 fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the
 23 kings? ¶ Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was
 read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their com-
 panions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and
 24 made them to cease ¹by force and power. Then ceased the work
 of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto
 the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.
- CHAP. 5. THEN the prophets, ^aHaggai the prophet, and ^bZechariah
 the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and
 2 Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. Then
 rose up ^cZerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son
 of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at
 Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping
 3 them. ¶ At the same time came to them ^dTatnai, governor on
 this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions,
 and said thus unto them, ^eWho hath commanded you to build

^a Hag. 1. 1.
^b Zech. 1. 1.

^c ch. 3. 2.

^d ver. 6.
^e ch. 6. 6.

^e ver. 9.

¹ Chald. *by me a decree is set.*

² Chald. *lifted up itself.*

³ Chald. *Make a decree.*

⁴ Chald. *by arm and power.*

18. *hath been...read*] It is doubtful if the Persian monarchs could ordinarily read. At any rate it was their habit to have documents read to them (cp. Esth. vi. 1). This is still the ordinary practice at Eastern courts.

19. The archives of the Babylonian kingdom would contain accounts of the insurrections raised, or threatened, by Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (2 K. xxiv. 1, 10, 20). It does not appear that there had ever been any rebellion against Persia.

20. *mighty kings &c.*] If this reference can scarcely have been to David or Solomon (see marg. ref.), of whom neither the Babylonian nor the Assyrian archives would be likely to have had any account,—it would probably be to Menahem (2 K. xv. 16) and Josiah (2 Chr. xxxiv. 6, 7, xxxv. 18).

24. *it ceased*] The stoppage of the building by the Pseudo-Smerdis is in complete harmony with his character. He was a Magus, devoted to the Magian elemental worship, and opposed to belief in a personal god. His religion did not approve of temples; and as he persecuted the Zoroastrian so would he naturally be inimical to the Jewish faith. The building was resumed in the second year of Darius (B.C. 520), and was only interrupted for about two years; since the Pseudo-Smerdis reigned less than a year.

V. 1. Haggai and Zechariah stirred up

Zerubbabel and Jeshua (v. 2; Hag. i. 14), and warned the people against neglecting the building of the Temple, in order to give themselves to the beautifying of their own houses (see Hag. i. 4, 9). Zechariah was the son of Berechiah, and grandson of Iddo (see marg. ref.; Mat. xxiii. 35). Cp. a similar application of "son" in the case of Jehu (2 K. ix. 20 note).

in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them] Rather, "in the name of the God of Israel, which was upon them." The two Prophets addressed the Jews, in respect of their being God's people, or, in Hebrew phrase (see Jer. xv. 16 marg.), "having God's name called upon them."

2. *began to build*] i.e. "made a second beginning"—recommenced the uncompleted work.

helping them] By infusing zeal into the people (see Hag. i. 12).

3. *governor on this side the river*] Cp. iv. 10 note. Tatnai was apparently satrap of Syria, which included the whole tract west of the Euphrates from Cilicia to the borders of Egypt. Zerubbabel must have been, to some extent, under his authority.

Who hath commanded you to build?] There was no doubt a formal illegality in the conduct of Zerubbabel and Jeshua; since all edicts of Persian kings continued in force unless revoked by their successors. But they felt justified in disobeying the decree

- 4 this house, and to make up this wall? /Then said we unto / ver. 10
 them after this manner, What are the names of the men ¹that
 5 make this building? But ²the eye of their God was upon the
 elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till
 the matter came to Darius: and then they returned ³answer by
 6 letter concerning this matter. ¶The copy of the letter that
 Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai,
⁴and his companions the Apharsachites, which *were* on this side
 7 the river, sent unto Darius the king: they sent a letter unto
 him, ⁵wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all
 8 peace. Be it known unto the king, that we went into the pro-
 vince of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded
 with ⁶great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work
 9 goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands. Then asked we
 those elders, *and* said unto them thus, ⁷Who commanded you to
 10 build this house, and to make up these walls? We asked their
 names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of
 11 the men that *were* the chief of them. And thus they returned
 us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven
 and earth, and build the house that was builded these many
 years ago, which a great king of Israel builded ⁸and set up.
 12 But ⁹after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven
 unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of ¹⁰Nebuchadnezzar
 the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house,
 13 and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first year
 of ¹¹Cyrus the king of Babylon *the same* king Cyrus made a
 14 decree to build this house of God. And ¹²the vessels also of
 gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar
 took out of the temple that *was* in Jerusalem, and brought them
 into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out
 of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto *one*,
¹³whose name *was* Sheshbazzar, whom he had made ¹⁴governor;
 15 and said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the
 temple that *is* in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded
 16 in his place. Then came the same Sheshbazzar, *and* ¹⁵laid the
 foundation of the house of God which *is* in Jerusalem: and
 since that time even until now hath it been in building, and
 17 ¹⁶yet it is not finished. Now therefore, if *it seem* good to the
 king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house,
 which *is* there at Babylon, whether it be *so*, that a decree was
 made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jeru-
 salom, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this
 matter.

¹ Chald. *that build this building*!

² Chald. *in the midst where- of*.

³ Chald. *stones of rolling*.
⁴ Or, *deputy*.

of the Pseudo-Smerdis (iv. 7 note), because the opposition between his religious views and those of his successor was matter of notoriety.

4. *Then said we* [The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic Versions have "Then said they," which brings this verse into exact accordance with v. 10.]

6. Apharsachites, like Apharsites, and Apharsathchites (iv. 9), are thought by some to be forms of the word "Persians," which is applied here generally to the foreign settlers in Samaria. [Others identify the

first and the third names with the "Paretaceni," a people on the Medo-Persian border.]

8. *great stones*] Lit. as in marg.; i.e. stones so large that they were rolled along, not carried. Others translate "polished stones."

16. *since that time even until now*] Sixteen years—from B.C. 536 to B.C. 520. The adversaries of the Jews here overstep the truth; since, in point of fact, the work had been suspended for a while (iv. 24).

17. *let there be search made...at Babylon*] They perhaps doubted whether proof of the

- ^a ch. 5. 17. **CHAP. 6.** **THEN** Darius the king made a decree, ^aand search was made in the house of the ¹rolls, where the treasures were ²laid up in Babylon. And there was found at ³Achmetha, in the palace that *is* in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein ³was a record thus written: In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth ^b1 Kin. 6.36. ⁴ thereof threescore cubits; ^bwith three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expences be given out of the ^c ch. 1. 7, 8. ⁵ king's house: and also let ^cthe golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which *is* at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and ^d brought again unto the temple which *is* at Jerusalem, *every one* to his place, and place *them* in the house of God. ^d ch. 5. 3. ⁶ ¶ ^dNow therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and ^eyour companions the Apharsachites, which *are* beyond the river, be ye far from thence: let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders ^f of the Jews build this house of God in his place. Moreover ^fI make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, *even* of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expences be given ^g unto these men, that they be not ^ghindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which *are* at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail: ^h ch. 7. 23. ¹⁰ ^hthat they may offer sacrifices ^hof sweet savours unto the God of Jer. 29. 7.
- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| ¹ Chald. <i>books.</i> | ⁴ Chald. <i>go.</i> | ⁷ <i>made.</i> |
| ² Chald. <i>made to descend.</i> | ⁵ Chald. <i>their societies.</i> | ⁷ Chald. <i>made to cease.</i> |
| ³ O., <i>Ecbatana</i> , or, in a <i>coffer.</i> | ⁶ Chald. <i>by me a decree is</i> | ⁸ Chald. <i>of rest.</i> |

decree of Cyrus remained in the archives. The Pseudo-Smerdis had had the records in his power for seven months; and, when he reversed the policy of his predecessors, might have been expected to destroy their edicts. The decree was not found at Babylon, the most natural place for it, but in the provincial capital of Ecbatana, which Tatnai and his friends had not asked Darius to have searched (see vi. 2).

VI. 1. A "house of the rolls" was discovered at Koyunjik, the ancient Nineveh, in 1850—a set of chambers, *i.e.* in the palace devoted exclusively to the storing of public documents. These were in baked clay, and covered the floor to the depth of more than a foot. Such a "house" was probably that at Babylon.

2. "Achmetha" is the "Ecbatana," or "Agbatana," of the Greeks, the Persian name for which, as we find in the Behistun Inscription, was HAGMATANA.

We must suppose that, when Babylon had been searched in vain, the other cities which possessed record-offices were visited, and the decree looked for in them. Ecbatana was the capital of Cyrus.

3. It is difficult to reconcile the dimensions here with expressions in Zechariah (iv. 10), Haggai (ii. 3), and even Ezra (iii. 12), which imply that the second Temple was smaller than the first (cp. 1 K. vi. 2). Perhaps the dimensions here are those which Cyrus required the Jews *not to exceed*.

4 The word translated "row" occurs only in this passage. Some regard it as a "course," and suppose that after every three courses of stone there followed a course of timber. Others understand three "storeys" of stone, with a fourth "storey" of woodwork on the summit (cp. 1 K. vi. 5, 6). Others consider that Cyrus intended to limit the *thickness* of the walls, which were not to exceed a breadth of three rows of stone, with an inner wooden wainscoting.

let the expences be given out of the king's house *i.e.* "out of the Persian revenue," a portion of the decree which was probably not observed during the later years of Cyrus and during the reign of Cambyses, and hence the burthen fell upon the Jews themselves (ii. 68, 69).

6. This verse gives the words of the de-

- 11 heaven, and ¹pray for the life of the king, and of his sons. Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, ¹let him be hanged thereon; ²and let his house be made a dunghill for this. And the God that hath caused his ³name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter *and* to destroy this house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.
- 13 ¶ Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shethar-boznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily. ⁴And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished *it*, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the ²commandment of ⁵Cyrus, and
- 15 ¹Darius, and ⁶Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the
- 16 sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. ¶ And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of ³the children of the captivity, kept ⁴the dedication of this house of God with joy, and ⁵offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according
- 18 to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in their ⁷divisions, and the Levites in their ⁸courses, for the service of God, which *is* at Jerusalem; ⁹as it is written in the
- 19 book of Moses. ¶ And the children of the captivity kept the
- 20 passover ¹⁰upon the fourteenth *day* of the first month. For the priests and the Levites were ¹¹purified together, all of them *were* pure, and ¹²killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.
- 21 And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from

¹ 1 Tim. 2. 1,
2.

² 2 Kin. 10. 27.
Dan. 2. 5.
& 3. 29.
³ 1 Kin. 9. 3.

⁴ ch. 5. 1, 2.

⁵ ch. 1. 1.
& 5. 13.
ver. 3.
⁶ ch. 4. 21.
⁷ ch. 7. 1.

⁸ 1 Kin. 8. 63.
⁹ 2 Chr. 7. 5.
¹⁰ ch. 8. 35.

¹¹ 1 Chr. 21. 1.
¹² 1 Chr. 23. 6.
¹³ Num. 3. 6.
& 8. 9.
¹⁴ Ex. 12. 6.

¹⁵ 2 Chr. 30. 15.
¹⁶ 2 Chr. 35. 11.

¹ Chald. *let him be destroyed*.

² Chald. *decree*.

³ Chald. *the sons of the*

transportation.

⁴ Chald. *according to the writing*.

creed of Darius, which was grounded upon, and probably recited, the decree of Cyrus.

11. *being set up, let him be hanged thereon*] Rather, "let him be lifted up and crucified upon it." Crucifixion was the most common form of capital punishment among the Persians.

12. *destroy all*] A similar malediction is found at the end of the great inscription of this same king Darius at Behistun. If any injure the tablet which he has set up, he prays that Ormazd will be their enemy, and that they may have no offspring, and that whatever they do, Ormazd may curse it for them.

to alter and to destroy this house] i.e. to alter the decree, and then proceed to destroy the house.

14. *Artaxerxes*] The Artaxerxes of marg. ref. seems to be meant (i.e. Longimanus); he was one of those who together with Cyrus and Darius helped forward the completion of the work.

15. "Adar" was the twelfth or last month of the Jewish year, corresponding

nearly with our March. The sixth year of Darius was B.C. 516-515.

17. Cp. with this modest sacrifice, which suits well "the day of small things" (Zech. iv. 10), the lavish offering of Solomon (marg. ref. *u*).

19. With this verse the writer resumes the use of the Hebrew language, which he had discarded for the Chaldee from iv. 8. With the exception of the letter of Artaxerxes (vii. 12-26), all the remainder of the book is in Hebrew.

20. Some render, "And the priests were purified; and the Levites, as one man, were all of them pure." A contrast is drawn between the universal purity of the Levites and the merely general purity of the priests (2 Chr. xxix. 34, xxx. 3), which made it fitting that the former should undertake the slaughter of *all* the paschal lambs, even of those which the priests were to consume. In later times the ordinary practice was for each head of a family to slay for himself.

* ch. 9. 11.
 * Ex. 12. 15.
 * 13. 6.
 2 Chr. 30. 21.
 & 35. 17.
 * Prov. 21. 1.
 * 2 Kin. 23. 29.
 2 Chr. 33. 11.
 ch. 1. 1.
 & ver. 6, &c.
 * Neh. 2. 1.
 * 1 Chr. 6. 14.

* ver. 11, 12,
 21.

* ver. 9.
 ch. 8. 22, 31.
 * ch. 8. 1.
 / See ch. 8.
 15, &c.
 * ch. 2. 43.
 & 8. 20.

* ver. 6.
 Neh. 2. 8, 18.
 * Ps. 119. 45.

the "filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat, and kept the "feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and "turned the heart "of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

CHAP. 7. NOW after these things, in the reign of "Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra ^bthe son of Seruiah, the son of Azariah, the son of 2 of Hilkiah, the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of 3 Ahitub, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of 4 Meraioth, the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, 5 the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the 6 son of Aaron the chief priest: this Ezra went up from Babylon; and he *was* "a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, "according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. 7 "And there went up *some* of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and /the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and 8 the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, 9 which *was* in the seventh year of the king. For upon the first day of the first month ¹began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, ^haccording 10 to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to "seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to

¹ Heb. *was the foundation of the going up.*

22. the king of Assyria] *i.e.* Darius. Assyria had so long been the great monarchy of western Asia that the sacred writers continue the title to those who had inherited the old Assyrian power, as first to the Babylonians (2 K. xxiii. 29), and secondly to the Persians. With similar inexactness we find Herodotus calling Cyrus "king of the Medes."

VII. 1. *after these things*] The words mark an interval of 57 years; if, with most commentators, we take Artaxerxes to be Longimanus. See *Introd.* p. 569. Three kings named Artaxerxes, the Greek rendering of the Hebrew Artakhshasta, and the Persian Artakhshatra, ruled over Persia, viz.:—Longimanus, Mnemon, and Ochus. Evidence is in favour of the first being meant here: he was the grandson of Darius Hystaspis, Joshua's contemporary.

The genealogy of Ezra here is incomplete. The time between the Exodus and Ezra must have exceeded a thousand years, and cannot have been covered by sixteen generations. One gap may be filled up from 1 Chr. vi. 7-10, which supplies six names between Meraioth and Azariah (v. 3): another gap probably occurs between Seraiah (v. 1) and Ezra himself; since Seraiah appears to be the High-Priest of Zedekiah's time (*marg. ref.*), who lived at least 130 years before Ezra. Three or four names are probably wanting in this place. Another name (Meraioth) may be supplied from 1 Chr. ix. 11, between Zadok and

Ahitub (v. 2). These additions would produce twenty-seven generations—a number nearly sufficient—instead of sixteen.

6. *a ready scribe*] Or, "a ready writer" (Ps. xlv. 1). The professional scribe was well known in Egypt from an early date (see Gen. xxxix. 4 note); and under David and his successors "scribes" were attached to the Court as the king's secretaries (2 Sam. viii. 17, xx. 25; 2 K. xii. 10, &c.). It was scarcely, however, till the time of the Captivity that the class to which Ezra belonged arose. The "scribes" of this time, and of later Jewish history, were students, interpreters, and copiers of the Law (*marg. ref.* and Jer. viii. 8). They retained the knowledge of the old dialect, which was being rapidly superseded by a new one. The emphatic application of the title "the scribe" to Ezra marks the high honour in which the office was now held. Its glories threw into the shade those of the priesthood.

the hand of the LORD...upon him] The use of this phrase in a good sense is rare elsewhere (cp. 1 K. xviii. 46), but is a favourite one with both Ezra and Nehemiah (see *marg. ref.*; Neh. ii. 8, 18).

9. The direct distance of Babylon from Jerusalem is about 520 miles; and the circuitous route by Carchemish and the Orontes valley, which was ordinarily taken by armies or large bodies of men, is about 900 miles. The time occupied in the journey is long, and is perhaps to be accounted for by the dangers alluded to in viii. 22, 31.

- 11 ¹teach in Israel statutes and judgments. ¶ Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, *even* a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel. Artaxerxes, ²king of kings, ³unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*, ⁴and at such a time. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own free-will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. Forasmuch as thou art sent ⁵of the king, and of his ⁶seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which *is* in thine hand; and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, ⁷whose habitation *is* in Jerusalem, ⁸and all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, ⁹offering willingly for the house of their God which *is* in Jerusalem: that thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their ¹⁰meat offerings and their drink offerings, and ¹¹offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which *is* in Jerusalem. And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God. The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, *those* deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow *it* out of the king's treasure house. And I, *even* I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which *are* beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily, unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred ¹²measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing *how much*. ¹³Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers,

¹ ver. 6. 25.
Deut. 33. 10.
Neh. 8. 1—8.
Mal. 2. 7.

¹ Ezek. 26. 7.
Dan. 2. 37.
¹¹ ch. 4. 10.

¹¹ Esth. 1. 14.

² 2 Chr. 6. 2.
1's. 135. 21.
³ ch. 8. 25.

⁴ 1 Chr. 29.
6, 9.

⁵ Num. 15.
4—13.
⁶ Deut. 12. 5,
11.

¹ Or, to Ezra the priest, a perfect scribe of the law of the God of heaven, peace, &c.

² Chald. from before the king.
³ Chald. corr.

⁴ Heb. Whatsoever is of the decree.

12. The title, "king of kings," is assumed by almost all the Persian monarchs in their inscriptions.

perfect peace ["Peace" is not in the original, and the word translated "perfect" occurs only in this place. Some prefer to take it as an adjective descriptive of Ezra (see marg.); others (LXX.) as the opening word of the first paragraph of the letter, and give it the meaning, "it is completed."]

14. *seven counsellors*] Herodotus relates that there were seven families pre-eminent in Persia, those of the seven conspirators against the Pseudo-Smerdis (iv. 7 note); and it is reasonable to suppose that the heads of these families formed the special council of the king; the "Achemenidae," or royal family, being represented by the head

of the branch next in succession to that of the reigning monarch (see marg. ref.).

21. *all the treasurers*] The Persian system of taxing the provinces through the satraps involved the establishment in each province of at least one local treasury.

22. This verse assigns limits to the permission of v. 20. As the Persian tribute was paid partly in money and partly in kind (see iv. 13 note), the treasuries would be able to supply them as readily as they could furnish money.

23. Lit. as in the margin, *i.e.*, Whatsoever is commanded in the Law with respect to the Temple service.

24. The decree of Artaxerxes was more favourable to the Jews than those of all previous Persian monarchs. We hear of a

- porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.
- 25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, [†]set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and [‡]teach ye them that know them not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or ¹to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment. ¶ [¶]Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, [¶]which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem: and [¶]hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as "the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

[†] Ex. 18. 21, 22.
[‡] Deut. 16. 18.
[¶] ver. 10.
¹ Chr. 17. 7.
 Mal. 2. 7.
 Matt. 23. 2, 3.
[¶] 1 Chr. 29. 10.
[¶] ch. 6. 22.
[¶] ch. 9. 9.

^a See ch. 5. 5.
 & ver. 6, 9.
 & ch. 8. 18.

CHAP. 8. THESE are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the 2 reign of Artaxerxes the king. Of the sons of Phinchas; Gershon: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; 3 ^aHattush. Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of ^bPharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the 4 males an hundred and fifty. Of the sons of Pahath-moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerariah, and with him two hundred males. 5 Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him 6 three hundred males. Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son 7 of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy 8 males. And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of 9 Michael, and with him fourscore males. Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and 10 eighteen males. And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josi- 11 phiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males. And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him 12 twenty and eight males. And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan ^athe son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males. 13 And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names are these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males. 14 Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and ^bZabbud, and with them 15 seventy males. ¶ And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there ^aabode we in tents three

^a 1 Chr. 3. 22.
^b ch. 2. 3.

¹ Chald. to rooting out.
² Or, the youngest son.

³ Or, Zaccur, as some read.
⁴ Or, pitched.

similar exemption of ecclesiastics from tribute, only to a less extent, under the Seleucidae.

ministers] The rare word here used, which in Daniel has the sense of "worshippers," appears to designate in this place the lowest class of persons employed in the service of the Temple.

26. banishment] Lit. as in marg. Separation from the congregation is probably intended (cp. x. 8).

27. An abrupt transition from the words of Artaxerxes to those of Ezra. Cp. a similar abrupt change in vi. 6. The language alters at the same time from Chaldee

to Hebrew, continuing henceforth to be Hebrew till the close of the book.

VIII. 2, 3. Punctuate as follows:—

2. ...of the sons of David, Hattush of the sons of Shechaniah.

3. Of the sons of Pharosh, Zechariah, &c.

Hattush, the descendant of David, was the grandson of Shechaniah (see marg. ref.).

Most of these names (rr. 2-14) occur also as those of heads of families in the list of the Jews who returned with Zerubbabel (ii. 3-15). The LXX. and Syriac Versions supply omissions in rr. 5, 10.

15. Ahava was both a town and a river

- days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there
 16 none of the 'sons of Levi. Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, ^c See ch. 7.7.
 for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan,
 and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam,
 chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, men of under-
 17 standing. And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the
 chief at the place Casiphia, and 'I told them what they should
 say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place
 Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house
 18 of our God. And by the good hand of our God upon us they
 'brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the
^d Neh. 8. 7.
^{& 9. 1, 5.}
 son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and
 19 his brethren, eighteen; and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshai-
 ah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty;
 20 'also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had ap-
 pointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty
 21 Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name. ¶ Then I
 'proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might
 'afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a ^hright way for
 22 us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For 'I
 was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horse-
 men to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had
 spoken unto the king, saying, ⁱ The hand of our God is upon all
 them for 'good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is
 23 'against all them that 'forsake him. So we fasted and besought
 24 our God for this: and he was 'intreated of us. ¶ Then I separ-
 ated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah,
 25 and ten of their brethren with them, and weighed unto them
^j the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even 'the offering of
 the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and
 26 his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered: I even
 weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver,
 and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred
 27 talents; also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and
 28 two vessels of 'fine copper, 'precious as gold. And I said unto
 them, Ye are 'holy unto the LORD; the vessels are 'holy also;
 and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD
 29 God of your fathers. Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh
 them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of
 the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house

¹ Heb. *I put words in their mouth*: See 2 Sam. 14. 3, 19.

¹ Heb. *yellow, or, shining brass*.
² Heb. *desirable*.

^g Lev. 21. 6,
 7, 8.
^h Deut. 33. 8.
ⁱ Lev. 22. 2, 3.
^j Num. 3. 4,
 15, 19, 20.

(r. 21). The modern name of the place is *Hit*. It is famous for its bitumen springs, and is situated on the Euphrates, at a distance of about 80 miles from Babylon, towards the north-west.

none of the sons of Levi] The Levites appear to have been disinclined to return to Jerusalem (see iii. 8 note).

17. *Casiphia*] Its situation is wholly unknown; but it cannot have been far from Ahava.

18. and *Sherebiah*] Either a name has fallen out before the words "a man of understanding," or the "and" here has crept into the text by accident. Sherebiah appears among the most earnest of the Levites under Nehemiah (marg. refl.).

22. What "enemy" menaced Ezra, and on what account, is wholly uncertain (cp. r. 31). Perhaps robber-tribes, Arab or Syrian, were his opponents.

27. *twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams*] Not of a thousand drams (*i.e.* darics) each, but worth altogether a thousand darics. As the value of the daric was about 22 shillings of our money, each bason, or saucer, would have been worth (apart from the fashioning) 55*l*.

of fine copper] The word translated "fine," which occurs here only, is thought to mean either "yellow" or "glittering" (see marg.). Probably the vessels were of *orichalcum*, an amalgam which was either brass or something nearly approaching to brass, but which

- 30 of the LORD. So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring *them* to Jerusalem unto the house of our God. ¶ Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and ^athe hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. And we ^ccame to Jerusalem, and abode there three days. Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels ^uweighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him *was* Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them *was* Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites; by number *and* by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time. *Also* the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, ^uoffered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he goats for a sin offering: all *this* *was* a burnt offering unto the LORD. And they delivered the king's ^vcommissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God.
- CHAP. 9. NOW when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not ^aseparated themselves from the people of the lands, ^bdoing according to their abominations, *even* of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.
- 2 For they have ^ctaken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the ^dholy seed have ^emingled themselves with the people of *those* lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down ^vastoned.
- 4 Then were assembled unto me every one that ^htrembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astoned until the ⁱevening sacrifice. ¶ And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my ^jheaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and ^kspread out my hands unto the LORD my God, and said, O my God, I am ^lashamed and blush to lift up
- ^a ch. 6. 21.
Neh. 9. 2.
^b Deut. 12. 30, 31.
^c Ex. 34. 16.
Deut. 7. 3.
Neh. 13. 23.
^d Ex. 19. 6.
& 22. 31.
Deut. 7. 6.
& 14. 2.
^e 2 Cor. 6. 11.
^f Job 1. 20.
^g Ps. 143. 4.
^h ch. 10. 3.
Isai. 66. 2.
ⁱ Ex. 29. 39.
^j Ex. 9. 29, 33.
^k Dan. 9. 7, 8.

^l Or, *affliction*.

was very rarely produced in the ancient world, and, when produced, was regarded as highly valuable.

31. The Jews with Ezra left Babylon on the first day of the first month (vii. 9). They reached Ahava in nine days, and, having remained there three (v. 15), quitted it, and resumed their journey on the twelfth. They reached Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month (vii. 9), four months after the departure from Babylon.

35. (^cp. marg. ref. The idea of offerings for all Israel pervades in this case the entire sacrifice, with the exception of the lambs, whose number (77) is peculiar, and has not been accounted for.

36. *the king's commissions*] i.e. the orders

issued to all governors of provinces near Judæa by Artaxerxes, given in vii. 21-24.

the king's lieutenants] Lit. "the king's satraps." The word is used in its strict sense, referring to the chief rulers of Persian provinces, from which the "governors" or rulers of smaller districts are distinguished.

IX. 1. *abominations*] The mixed marriages had prevented that complete separation of the people of God from the idolatrous rites, or "abominations," which the Law required, and which was necessary for purity of religion. See 1 K. xi. 2 note.

3. Plucking out the hair with the hands, so common among the classical nations, is, comparatively speaking, rarely mentioned as practised by Asiatics.

my face to thee, my God: for ^mour iniquities are increased over ⁿour head, and our ¹trespass is ^ogrown up unto the heavens.

7 Since the days of our fathers ^{have} ^owe been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities ^phave we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to ^qcon-

8 fusion of face, as ^{it is} this day. And now for a ²little space grace hath been ^{showed} from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us ^{3a} a nail in his holy place, that our God may ⁷lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in

9 our bondage. ⁴For we ^{were} bondmen; ⁵yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but ⁶hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and ⁴to repair the desolations thereof,

10 and to give us ^{7a} a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy

11 commandments, which thou hast commanded ⁵by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the ⁷filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it ⁶from one end to

12 another with their uncleanness. Now therefore ²give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, ⁴nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and ⁵leave it for

13 an inheritance to your children for ever. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God ⁷hast punished us less than our iniquities ^{deserve}, and hast given us ^{such} deliverance as

14 this; should we ⁴again break thy commandments, and ⁴join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be ⁷angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that

15 ^{there should be} no remnant nor escaping? O LORD God of Israel, ⁷thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as ^{it is} this day: behold, we are ⁴before thee ⁴in our trespasses: for we cannot ⁴stand before thee because of this.

¹ Or, *guiltiness*.² Heb. *moment*.³ Or, *a pin*: that is, *a constant and sure abode*: So

Isai. 22. 23.

⁴ Heb. *to set up*.⁵ Heb. *by the hand of thy servants*.⁶ Heb. *from month to month*: as 2 Kin. 21. 16.⁷ Heb. *hast withheld beneath our iniquities*.^m Ps. 33. 1.ⁿ 2 Chr. 28. 9.

Rev. 18. 5.

^o Ps. 106. 6.

Dan. 9. 5, 6, 9.

^p Deut. 28. 36, 61.^q Neh. 9. 30.^r Dan. 9. 7, 8.^r Ps. 13. 3.

& 34. 5.

^s Neh. 9. 36.^t Ps. 136. 23.^u ch. 7. 24.^v Isai. 5. 2.^y ch. 6. 21.^z Ex. 23. 32.

& 34. 16.

Deut. 7. 3.

^{aa} Deut. 23. 6.^{ab} Prov. 13. 22.

& 20. 7.

^c Ps. 103. 10.^d John 5. 14.

2 Pet. 2. 20, 21.

^e ver. 2.^f Neh. 13. 23.

27.

^g Deut. 9. 3.^h Neh. 9. 33.

Dan. 9. 14.

ⁱ Rom. 3. 19.^j 1 Cor. 15. 17.^k Ps. 130. 3.

7. Very similar in tone to this are the confessions of Nehemiah (Neh. ix. 29-35) and of Daniel (marg. ref.). The Captivity had done its work by deeply convincing of sin the nation that had been proud and self-righteous previously.

8. The "little space" was above sixty years, counting from the second year of Darius (iv. 24), or about eighty, counting from the first year of Cyrus (i. 1). This does not seem to Ezra much in the life of a nation.

a remnant to escape] Rather, "a remnant that has escaped." The "remnant" is the new community that has returned from the Captivity.

a nail] Cp. marg. note and ref. The metaphor is probably drawn from a tent-pin, which is driven into the earth to make the tent firm and secure.

9. *we were bondmen*] Rather, "we are bondmen" (cp. marg. ref.). The Israelites, though returned from the Captivity, were still "bondmen." The Persian monarch was their absolute lord and master.

11. *saying*] The words which follow in this verse are not quoted from any previous book of Scripture, but merely give the general sense of numerous passages. (Cp. marg. ref.)

13. *deliverance*] Or, "remnant," as in v. 8.

15. Some take "righteous" to mean here "kind" or "merciful." Others give it the more usual sense of "just," and understand the full meaning of the passage to be, "Thou art righteous, and hast punished us, because of our sin, the contraction of forbidden marriages, so that we are a mere remnant of what was once a great people."

^a Dan. 9. 20.^b 2 Chr. 20. 9.^c Neh. 13. 27.^d 2 Chr. 34. 31.^e ch. 9. 4.^f Deut. 7. 2, 3.^g 1 Chr. 23. 10.^h Neh. 5. 12.ⁱ Deut. 9. 18.^k See 1 Sam. 12. 18.^l Josh. 7. 19.
Prov. 28. 13.

CHAP. 10. NOW "when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down ^bbefore the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people ²¹ wept very sore. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, *one* of the sons of Ilam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have ^ctrespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning ³ this thing. Now therefore let us make ^da covenant with our God ²to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to ^ethe counsel of my lord, and of those that ^ctremble at ^fthe commandment of our God; and let it be done according ⁴to the law. Arise; for *this* matter *belongeth* unto thee: we also ⁵*will be* with thee: ^gbe of good courage, and do it. ¶ Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, ⁴to swear that they should do according to this word. And they ⁶swore. Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and *when* he came thither, he ⁱdid eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had ⁷been carried away. And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that ⁸they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; and that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be ³forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away. ¶ Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It *was* the ninth month, on the twentieth *day* of the month; and ^kall the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of *this* matter, ¹⁰and for ⁴the great rain. And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and ³have taken strange wives, ¹¹to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore ^lmake confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure:

¹ Heb. *wept a great weeping.*² Heb. *to bring forth.*³ Heb. *decree it.*⁴ Heb. *the shower.*⁵ Heb. *have caused to dwell, or, have brought back.*

X. 1. *before the house of God*] i.e. in front of the Temple, praying towards it (1 K. viii. 30, 35; 1 Sam. vi. 10), and thus in the sight of all the people who happened at the time to be in the great court.

2. Jehiel was one of those who had taken an idolatrous wife (r. 26); and Shechaniah had therefore had the evil brought home to him.

3. *let it be done according to the law*] i.e. let a formal "bill of divorcement" be given to each foreign wife, whereby she will be restored to the condition of an unmarried woman, and be free to wed another husband (see Deut. xxiv. 1, 2). The facility of divorce among the Jews is well known. According to many of the Rabbis, a bill of divorcement might be given by the husband for the most trivial cause. Thus no legal difficulty stood in the way of Shechaniah's proposition; and Ezra regarded it as neces-

sary for the moral and religious welfare of the people.

6. The "chamber of Johanan" was probably one of those attached externally to the Temple (see 1 K. vi. 5, 6). Eliashib was the grandson of Jeshua (iii. 2), and was High-Priest under Nehemiah (Neh. iii. 1). He could assign chambers in the Temple to whomsoever he pleased (see Neh. xiii. 4, 5).

8. *separated from the congregation*] i.e. "excommunicated" (cp. Ex. xii. 19; Num. xix. 20, &c.). The power assigned to Ezra is stated in vii. 25, 26.

9. *it was the ninth month*] Or, our December, a time when rain falls heavily in Palestine: four months, therefore, after Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem (cp. vii. 9).

the street] Rather, "the court," the "broad," "spacious, place" (cp. 2 Chr. xxix. 4 note).

and ^mseparate yourselves from the people of the land, and from ^m ver. 3.
 12 the strange wives. ¶ Then all the congregation answered and
 13 said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do. But
 the people *are* many, and *it is* a time of much rain, and we are
 not able to stand without, neither *is this* a work of one day or
 two: for ¹we are many that have transgressed in this thing.
 14 Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all
 them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at
 appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the
 judges thereof, until ²the fierce wrath of our God ² for this ² Chr. 30. 9.
 15 matter be turned from us. ¶ Only Jonathan the son of Asahel
 and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah ³ were employed about this
 matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.
 16 And the children of the captivity did so. ¶ And Ezra the priest,
 with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers,
 and all of them by *their* names, were separated, and sat down in
 17 the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. And
 they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives
 18 by the first day of the first month. ¶ And among the sons of
 the priests there were found that had taken strange wives:
namely, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his
 19 brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. And
 they ⁴ gave their hands that they would put away their wives; ⁴ 2Kin. 10. 15.
 and *being* ⁵ guilty, *they offered* a ram of the flock for their tres- ¹ Chr. 29. 24.
 20 pass. And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah. ² Chr. 30. 8.
 21 And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, ³ Lev. 6. 4, 6.
 22 and Jehiel, and Uziah. And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai,
 23 Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasa. ¶ Also of
 the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah, (*the same is*
 24 Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. Of the singers also;
 Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri.
 25 ¶ Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Je-
 ziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah,
 26 and Benaiah. And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah,
 27 and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah. And of the
 sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth,
 28 and Zabad, and Aziza. Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan,
 29 Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. And of the sons of Bani; Mes-
 hullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth.
 30 And of the sons of Pahath-moab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah,
 Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manassch.
 31 And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, She-
 32, 33 maiah, Shimeon, Benjamin, Malluch, *and* Shemariah. Of the
 sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jere-
 34 mai, Manassch, *and* Shimei. Of the sons of Bani; Maadai,
 35, 36 Amram, and Uel, Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh, Vaniah, Mere-

¹ Or, *we have greatly of-
fended in this thing.*

² Or, *fill this matter be dis-
patched.*

³ Heb. *stool.*

15. Some translate, "Nevertheless Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah *opposed this*." The opposition was useless (r. 16).

17. The business occupied the commission full two months. In some cases, it may be presumed, they had to summon persons before them who did not wish to part

with their foreign wives; in all, they had to assure themselves that the wives were foreign; finally, they had in every case where they decreed a divorce to make out the "writing of divorcement" (r. 3).

18-43. (cp. with the list in ch. ii. 19. *they gave their hands*) i.e. "solemnly pledged themselves" (cp. marg. ref.).

37, 38 moth, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau, and Bani, 39 and Binnui, Shimei, and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah, 40, 41 ¹ Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, Azareel, and Shelemiah, She- 42, 43 mariah, Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, 44 Bonaiah. All these had taken strange wives: and *some* of them had wives by whom they had children.

¹ Or, *Machnadebri*, according to some copies.

44. The guilty persons were, it would seem, 113 in number. They comprised four members of the High-Priest's family, thirteen other priests, ten Levites, and eighty-six lay Israelites belonging to at least ten distinct families. The fact noted in the second clause of the verse must have increased the difficulty of Ezra's task.